

Dole hints Bush led CIA while it paid Noriega

Plans an announcement today

By Christine Chinlund
Globe Staff

NEW ORLEANS - Sen. Bob Dole hinted yesterday, but would not say explicitly, that the Panamanian ruler, Gen. Manuel Antonio Noriega, may have been on the CIA payroll when Vice President George Bush directed the agency.

Questioned about evidence of such an arrangement, Dole said, "There are some who say he's been on the payroll ... since '66. That is all I know right now."

The Kansas senator said he would make a major announcement today, but it was unclear whether he would elaborate on a possible Bush-Noriega connection.

Meanwhile, a senior Dole official, demanding anonymity, told reporters that at least two sources have "reliably" informed the campaign that the CIA had paid Noriega millions of dollars over a period of 20 years or more, including 1976-1977, the period during which Bush headed the CIA.

"Fair questions"

"The question is, was Noriega involved with narcotics at that time, and, effectively, did the vice president have any knowledge of it?" the Dole official said. "These are at least fair questions to ask."

The Dole campaign "is starting to sound like a campaign of Lyndon LaRouche," said Bush's press secretary, Peter Teeley, referring to the extremist politician who has made allegations of drug ties against major public figures.

Teeley also said the vice president would have no comment until he hears what Dole has to say today.

"If Sen. Dole has evidence, let him lay it out and let's see what it is. We shouldn't be leaping at every rumor," Teeley said.

Noriega, a defiant survivor of recent challenges to his rule, was indicted in the United States in February on drug-trafficking charges.

A hard edge

In raising a possible Bush-Noriega link, Dole also raised the stakes in these final days before Super Tuesday. And he continued the hard-edged tone he has adopted as polls have pointed to his defeat next week at Bush's hands.

Dole also put his campaign out on a limb, challenging Bush on an explosive issue without having supporting evidence in hand.

The candidate gingerly raised the issue at a news conference following a rally in a downtown park. He began by faulting Bush for having to reach back to his tenure as CIA director to show that he has been in a decision-making job.

Continued Dole, with a touch of sarcasm:

"He made all those decisions in the CIA. What were they? Was Noriega on the payroll when he was CIA director? The CIA payroll?"

Asked several times to explain, Dole referred only to "some evidence" that Noriega was on the CIA payroll for a long time.

He also pointed to the activities of Daniel Murphy, Bush's former chief of staff, who reportedly consulted for Panama after leaving the government.

Earlier this week, Dole suggested that such activities sent mixed signals to Noriega, whom the United States wants removed from power.

Asked yesterday if Bush is the one sending those signals, Dole replied, "I don't know if he's giving any signals to Noriega," but he went on to note Murphy's ties to the Panamanian government.

Said Dole, skirting questions of evidence and detail, "I am just saying this: I am telling you Bob Dole has said no to thugs, no to drugs, no to Noriega."

Following the senator's vague remarks, a senior official elaborated.

He said that several weeks ago, the campaign was contacted by two sources whom he called "people with access to the knowledge." The sources told of CIA payments to Noriega during Bush's CIA tenure, the official said.

Asked if both sources came from the CIA, the spokesman said no. Asked if one did, he declined to comment.

The spokesman said he did not know when Noriega's alleged drug dealing was supposed to have begun - perhaps, he said, after Bush's term at the CIA - or whether the vice president authorized any payments.

"All I know is that Noriega has been indicted ..." he said, "and that Noriega, we are told, was on the payroll during the time the vice president was director" of the CIA.

The New York Times _____
The Washington Times _____
The Wall Street Journal _____
The Christian Science Monitor _____
New York Daily News _____
USA Today _____
The Chicago Tribune _____
Boston Globe 21
Date 3 March 88

All Dole is doing, he said, is asking Bush to explain.

Dole is not the first to hint that Noriega may have been on the payroll of the CIA.

In fact, NBC News initially raised the allegation last month, shortly before two federal grand juries indicted Noriega on charges of complicity in drug-running, money laundering and racketeering.

NBC's report was later bolstered by United Press International, which reported that Noriega had been on the CIA's payroll

"for at least a decade." The CIA has declined comment about the report.

According to the UPI report, the CIA payments were designed to woo Noriega away from Soviet influence.

Quoting an anonymous congressional staff member, the report said that under the Reagan administration and CIA Director William J. Casey, the agency also paid Noriega to allow the United

States to conduct covert activities in favor of the Nicaraguan contras and against the Cubans inside Panama.

Stephen Kurkjian and Walter V. Robinson of the Globe staff contributed to this report.